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## Viewing cable #06MANAGUA370, MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING: ALVARADO CONTINUES TO

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### Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

### Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA370**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06MANAGUA370</a>	<a href="#">2006-02-15 23:06</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Managua</a>

Appears in these articles:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000370

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DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2016

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SUBJECT: MUCH ADO ABOUT EVERYTHING: ALVARADO CONTINUES TO VACILATE OVER MONTEALEGRE ALLIANCE

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

**¶1.** (C) SUMMARY: Presidential-hopeful Jose Antonio Alvarado wants to have his cake and eat it too, continuing to waffle between allying with Eduardo Montealegre and entering into Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC)-initiated primaries.

Ambassador noted in his recent meeting with Alvarado and his advisers that time is running short, urging Alvarado to steer clear of a path that PLC leader/convicted prisoner Arnoldo Aleman controls. Alvarado admits that the PLC primary proposal is likely a "set-up," but he intends to respond and seek clarification on a number of points. Alvarado was partially receptive to our suggestion that he and possible running mate Eduardo Montealegre present a joint counter offer, commenting that they are making progress towards forging an alliance; however, he prefers that they each present similar counter proposals. Clarifying that he is working on two parallel tracks -- one to form an alliance with Montealegre, and the other, to draw the PLC into a broader Liberal coalition -- Alvarado argues that these efforts are not contradictory. He believes that only by exhausting all options can he -- and Montealegre -- reach out to Liberal voters in good conscience and expect their votes.

END SUMMARY.

Primaries - or Bust

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**¶2.** (C) In Ambassador's two-hour session on February 14 with presidential-hopeful Jose Antonio Alvarado and two advisers, Eduardo Urcuyo and Ariel Granera, Alvarado insisted that, while the PLC primary proposal (see below) is likely a "set-up," he will respond in writing and seek clarification on a number of points. Alvarado asserted that he will either compete in free and fair primaries or he will not compete at all, claiming he will neither run on a PLC ticket, nor separately with Montealegre without them. He remarked that the PLC had asked him to serve as Jose Rizo's running mate, an offer he declined because he will not accept Aleman's "dedazo."

**¶3.** (C) Alvarado was partially receptive to our suggestion that he and possible running mate Eduardo Montealegre present a joint counter proposal to hold primaries in May, suggesting instead that they each present similar counter offers. He shared that he had dined the night before with Montealegre, observing that they are making progress towards reaching an alliance. Clarifying that he is working on two parallel tracks -- one to form an alliance with Montealegre, and the other, to draw the PLC into a broader Liberal coalition -- Alvarado argued that these efforts are not contradictory.

Only by exhausting all options can he -- and Montealegre -- reach out to Liberal voters in good conscience and expect their votes. While Montealegre is leveraging his position vis a vis the PLC by competing in the March 5 Atlantic Coast elections, he is exhausting all options to bring aboard the PLC and to reduce Aleman's hold on the party, explained Alvarado.

¶4. (SBU) (Note: Montealegre may be in for a disappointment.

According to preliminary results of IRI's poll on the Atlantic Coast political process, Montealegre will fare poorly in the March 5 election. A combination of FSLN-generated fraud (backdating of DOBs on 1,000s of birth certificates plus the relocation and cedula of 1,000s of other Sandinista supporters) and confusion are likely to give the FSLN a massive win in the North Atlantic Autonomous Zone (RAAN) and a more modest PLC majority in the South Atlantic Autonomous Zone (RAAS). According to the poll, many voters who support Montealegre are confused and intend to check box 1 on the ballot (PLC) because they still associate Montealegre with the PLC.)

Background: Primaries According to the PLC

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¶5. (U) By way of background, on Feb. 9, the PLC invited dissident Liberal candidates Alvarado and Montealegre to participate jointly with the PLC presidential pre-candidates in one round of primaries. The basic points of the PLC proposal follow:

- Montealegre and Alvarado may participate in one round of primaries with the other six PLC pre-candidates.
- They may register party officials from their alliance parties by Feb. 28, a process which would presumably result in a field of 250,000 alliance party officials who would be eligible to vote in the primaries.
- They must reply to the PLC proposal by Feb. 23.
- The proposal does not mention using the primaries to select National Assembly or Parlacen deputies (and probably does not include them).

¶6. (U) Several points in the PLC proposal require further clarification, including:

- Change of the PLC statutes to allow selection by primaries VS convention.
- The exact composition of the voting list, which would need to include all of Montealegre's and Alvarado's alliance officials;
- Which deputy positions, if any, would also be decided by the primaries;
- How the other deputy positions would be selected;
- The need to modify all alliance party statutes to recognize the winner(s) of the primaries;
- Whether other democratic pre-candidates would be eligible to compete (e.g. Francisco Fiallos of APRE); and,
- The selection method of the vice presidential candidate.

The Situation According to Montealegre

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¶7. (C) Local IRI Director Gilberto Valdez reported on February 13 that Montealegre may announce at a February 16 press conference his decision not to participate in the primaries as proposed by the PLC. Rather, Montealegre intends to seek an agreement with Alvarado, ideally before his Thursday press conference. According to Montealegre,

Conservative Party (PC) leader Mario Rapaccioli has agreed to modify the PC's deal with Montealegre's ALN and relinquish the vice presidential position to Alvarado if the two candidates reach an agreement. (Note: Rapaccioli has not yet discussed this decision with other PC leaders.) Valdez also confirmed that Aleman allowed the PLC to offer Montealegre and Alvarado to participate in one-step primaries to derail promising negotiations between the two. He added that some Alvarado advisers are still working to persuade Alvarado to abandon talks with Montealegre and join the PLC primaries.

APRE's Perspective

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¶8. (C) Alianza por la Republica (APRE) President/Assembly Deputy Miguel Lopez Baldizon offered a third perspective on the PLC proposal, asserting to polcouns on February 14 that the PLC offer should have been institutional, to APRE, not Alvarado, who he termed an APRE "free-lancer." Lopez also agreed that APRE and Montealegre's ALN should submit a joint counter offer to the PLC; he intends to broach the subject with Montealegre. APRE will also seek OAS technical advice in its February 15 meeting with the visiting OAS team regarding the primary process, explained Lopez. (Note: According to Valdez, the PLC deliberately invited Alvarado, not APRE, in an attempt to separate Alvarado from the APRE.)

¶9. (C) On the subject of presidential candidates and the ongoing impasse among different Liberal factions, Lopez argued that President Bolanos holds the key to the solution; he must make up his mind and instruct his "troops." He downplayed the recent falling out he had with Bolanos, alleging it had been engineered by Bolanos' senior political adviser Frank Arana, and had since been resolved.

It's PLC's Institutional Edge, Stupid

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¶10. (C) Alvarado and his advisers agreed with Ambassador that the PLC has lost much of its political machinery and considerable popular support. However, Granera insisted that the PLC continues to enjoy an institutional advantage over Alvarado and Montealegre because along with the FSLN, the PLC controls the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE), the courts, and the Fiscalia -- the entities involved in the electoral

process and "controlling" the outcome. Urcuyo commented that when the PLC controlled the majority of Nicaragua's municipalities, the PLC, as the FSLN is doing nowadays, would backdate birth dates to allow 14 and 15-year olds to vote. "We did this for the sake of democracy," explained a straight-faced Urcuyo. (Comment: In other words, an ALN-PC campaign independent of the PLC could be disadvantaged by fraud committed by both the FSLN and the PLC.)

Avoiding a Four-Way Race at All Costs

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¶11. (C) Granera was adamant that a four-way race best serves Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega's interests, arguing that if the ultimate objective is to defeat Ortega, this option must be avoided at all costs. Any of these Liberal candidates -- Alvarado, Montealegre, Jose Rizo, Francisco Aguirre Sacasa, or Ramiro Sacasa -- are honorable and would be a better option than Ortega, he reasoned. (Comment: Conservative Ariel Granera, who in his spare time serves as a senior-level MFA official, is likely one of the advisers recommending that Alvarado explore "options" with the PLC and avoid an alliance with Montealegre, at least for now. Urcuyo, on the other hand, admitted that Aleman's game plan may be to allow an Ortega victory in exchange for his freedom. If this is the case, and a number of other interlocutors have shared the same assessment with us, Montealegre's allying with the PLC would be tantamount to political suicide. End Comment.)

Comment

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¶12. (C) The PLC's about-face came shortly after Montealegre and Alvarado appeared to be moving closer to forging a combined "Third Way" alliance and when polls and other indicators suggest a PLC defeat in the March 5 Atlantic Coast elections. The new proposal may reflect both the initiative of some PLC'ers who sincerely desire a sound and legitimate unification of Liberal forces and yet another ploy by Aleman to recapture the lost strength of the PLC while maintaining his control of the party. Without the inclusion of deputy positions in the primary process, Aleman will again be able to select sycophants personally loyal to him and perpetuate his control of the party. Even if Montealegre were to win the presidency with the support of the PLC, he would be hamstrung -- "a la Bolanos" -- by a legislative bloc controlled by the caudillo.

¶13. (C) Comment continued. Alvarado, who wants to have his cake and eat it too, continues to flirt with the PLC, while Montealegre maintains his position not to associate with the PLC so long as Aleman controls it. Alvarado's argument that to win a Liberal alliance must include the PLC, because the PLC has institutional presence that can affect the outcome of the March and November elections, is only partially valid. Clearly, Daniel Ortega, who controls Aleman's destiny through the courts, has the upper hand in the Ortega-Aleman pact. The Sandinista majority in the CSE has led to virtually total Sandinista control of the CSE's operations.

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